CONFERENCE OF THE EIGHTEEN-NATION COMMITTEE ON DISARMAMENT

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UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS

Letter dated 2 April 1966 from the Representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations

On 24 March 1966 I received a letter, addressed to me as Representative of the USSR and co-Chairman of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament, from the officers of the World Federation of Trade Unions, together with a memorandum addressed by the World Federation of Trade Unions to the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament.

I request you to arrange for the aforementioned memorandum from the World Federation of Trade Unions on the problem of disarmament to be circulated by the Secretariat as an official document of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament.

(signed) A. Roshchin.

Representative of the USSR
in the Eighteen-Nation Committee
on Disarmament.

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Geneva, 24 March 1966

Your Excellency,

Pursuant to a decision of the fifty-first session of the Executive Bureau of the World Federation of Trade Unions instructing us to transmit to the United Nations Conference on Disarmament a memorandum concerning the position of our Federation, which supports the application of a real disarmament policy, we have the honour to transmit the said memorandum to you herewith.

We have no doubt that you will give your very closest attention to the request, formulated by WFTU in the name of the workers of the whole world, that the Governments of the member nations of the Eighteen-Nation Committee, as it has been called, should orient their work towards positive decisions, so as to put a stop to the armaments race that is now proceeding and lay the foundations for a genuine and progressive reduction in armaments throughout the world.

Accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Renato BITOSSI
President, WFTU.

Louis SAILLANT
General Secretary, WFTU.

Luis PADILLA
Secretary, WFTU.

MEMORANDUM OF THE WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS
TO THE CHAIRMAN
OF THE EIGHTEEN-NATION COMMITTEE ON DISARMAMENT

The World Federation of Trade Unions has on several occasions approached various international institutions, including the United Nations, and the Disarmament Conference itself at previous meetings, to demand the application of a genuine disarmament policy. Expressing the aspirations of the workers and trade unions of all countries, the WFTU declared itself in favour of a ban on nuclear weapons and the cessation of all nuclear tests, against the proliferation of weapons of mass extermination and for the liquidation of military bases on foreign soil.

Recently, the 6th World Trade Union Congress, after noting that "the stockpiling of nuclear weapons and of weapons of mass destruction creates a particularly dangerous situation", once more called on all the workers to act in order "to impose universal and complete disarmament under international control", since "the fight for peace is more than ever the common task of the workers and trade unions of the whole world".

Pursuing this policy, which is the continuing line of action of the World Federation of Trade Unions, the Executive Bureau of the WFTU, when it met in Prague from 28 February to 2 March 1966, decided to approach the Disarmament Conference and call upon it once more on behalf of the workers and trade unions of the world to take practical steps in favour of disarmament and against the atomic danger. Recent events, which illustrate most dramatically the risks arising for peace and humanity as a result of the policy of cold war and nuclear armament, make such action the more urgent.

For the past one-and-a-half months, public opinion has been following with great anxiety the efforts made to recover the thermonuclear weapons and other atomic devices which fell in the vicinity of the Spanish village of Palomares, following the collision of a United States B-52 bomber with a refuelling plane. Other accidents of this nature have already occurred on previous occasions both in the United States and in other regions flown over by strategic B-52 bombers carrying nuclear weapons. The incident at Palomares is the thirteenth.

The United States Department of State has officially admitted that two H-bomb detonators, which fell near Palomares, exploded. It was by pure chance that others did not explode as well. This whole area of Spain was therefore in danger of being destroyed as a result of the explosion of a bomb a thousand times more powerful than those of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The State Department admits that one of the thermonuclear bombs which fell into the sea has not been found. Fishing has been prohibited within a ten-mile radius. The H-bomb covers split open on reaching the ground, releasing particles of plutonium 239 and uranium, which were scattered over the earth and contaminated the crops. The harvest had to be destroyed. According to a Spanish announcement, more than 2,000 persons were exposed to radiation. Other effects will undoubtedly be discovered sooner or later. Despite repressive action by the Franco police, the workers and the people of Spain are manifesting their legitimate indignation; they accuse their Government of concealing the truth and of complicity, and, by their mass campaigns and documents backed by thousands of signatures, they are expressing their determination to prohibit flights of American strategic bombers over Spain and to liquidate the foreign bases on their national territory.

The workers and trade unions of the world share the anger and indignation of the workers and people of Spain, for they feel that the danger constituted by flights of bombers carrying nuclear weapons over foreign territory is a matter of direct concern to all.

This constant threat to international security can quite obviously lead to war through some sort of accident. A catastrophe like that which happened in Spain might happen any day in some other place, sowing death and destruction, and unleash a conflict with unforeseeable consequences.

In view of this situation, the World Federation of Trade Unions, speaking on behalf of the workers, both men and women, and of the trade unions it represents, calls on the Disarmament Conference to take the necessary steps to ban flights over foreign territories by strategic bombers carrying nuclear weapons.

Concerned for the maintenance and safeguarding of peace, which is the workers' most precious boon, the World Federation of Trade Unions supports the workers and trade unions of the whole world in their resolute opposition to the spread of nuclear weapons. It draws the attention of the Conference to the danger constituted by

attempts to give atomic weapons to a State like the Federal Republic of Germany, the only State which openly advances territorial claims in Europe, and in which highly-placed political and military leaders are indulging with increasing frequency in statements and appeals which are themselves at the same time an expression of the revanchist spirit and an attempt to render impossible the achievement of any permanent security for the peoples and States of Europe.

They are demanding a revision of European frontiers, and more particularly the attachment of the German Democratic Republic to the Federal Republic of Germany. The conversion of the Federal Republic of Germany into a nuclear Power is consequently a means of furthering a policy of strength, territorial claims and highly dangerous annexation. In this connexion, the passage in President Johnson's statement of 7 May 1965 in which, alluding to the German Democratic Republic, he said that "the shame of the Eastern Zone must be ended" is disturbing.

In addition, there was a meeting in Washington recently of the nuclear planning sub-committee of a special committee set up in NATO last November on the proposal of Mr. MacNamara, the United States Secretary of Defence. A representative of the Federal Republic of Germany plays a prominent part in this body.

The World Federation of Trade Unions is following these developments very carefully.

Born of the desire for peace expressed by the workers of the whole world immediately after the war, the WFTU included in its Constitution as a fundamental task the endeavour to "combat war and the causes of war and to work for a stable and lasting peace".

The problem of the rearmament of the Federal Republic of Germany has been a matter of concern to the WFTU for a long time.

The Programme of Action adopted by the 5th World Trade Union Congress in 1961 called for a solution of the German problem by way of negotiations in order to eliminate a dangerous hotbed of provocation and international tension in the heart of Europe and to foil the dangerous, warmongering and revenge-seeking plans which are being revived in the ruling circles of Western Germany.

Proceeding from this situation, the 6th World Trade Union Congress affirmed that the West German policy is causing great concern, which is justified by history.

In taking up this position against West German rearmament, the World Federation of Trade Unions is defending the interests of the German working class as well as the aspirations of its trade unions.

The World Federation of Trade Unions considers that the two German States must renounce the right to obtain nuclear weapons or to dispose of them in any form.

That is also the wish of the workers in the two German States. It is generally known that, when it met in Hanover in 1962, the 6th Congress of the Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB) (Confederation of German Trade Unions) (Federal Republic of Germany) passed a resolution which called for the banning and destruction of all nuclear, bacteriological and chemical weapons by an international treaty, and for the cessation of all nuclear tests. In 1964, in an appeal entitled "Never another war" the DGB reaffirmed this position.

The Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (FDGB) (Free Confederation of German Trade Unions), which speaks for the workers of the German Democratic Republic, has been following a peace-loving policy ever since its foundation, in keeping with the decisions of the world trade union movement in 1945.

True to its commitments towards the workers of the whole world, the World Federation of Trade Unions shares the desire, stated by the United Nations General Assembly, for an international agreement on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and on disarmament.

Anxious to do its utmost to remove the danger of a new conflict which would inevitably assume the form of a thermonuclear war, the World Federation of Trade Unions has already taken a stand, and once again speaks out in support of the proposals for nuclear-free zones in Central Europe and in other parts of the world, and particularly in Africa.

All these questions are now under examination by the Eighteen-Nations Committee. We are waiting to hear positive results.

On behalf of the 138 million workers it represents, the World Federation of Trade Unions feels bound to inform the Committee of its position on these problems.

It calls on the Eighteen-Nation Committee to do everything possible to arrive at concrete conclusions as soon as possible, so as to pave the way to an era of gradual and controlled disarmament, in accordance with the aspirations already expressed by many Governments, both those which are members and those which are not members of the Eighteen-Nation Committee.

President of the WFTU:

Renato BITOSSI

General Secretary of the WFTU

Louis SAILLANT

Geneva, 23 March 1966